

## IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-6 (cancel)

7. (new) An aqueous pickling agent for stainless steel, said pickling agent comprising:

1.5 to 16 wt-% sulfuric acid or 2.0 to 30 wt-% phosphoric acid;

0.5 to 14 wt-% hydrogen fluoride; and

0.5 to 15.5 wt-% acid-soluble aromatic nitro compound,

wherein no iron (III) compound is supplied, and wherein merely in the starting phase an oxidizing agent can be supplied, which oxidizes iron (II) to form iron (III), wherein said pickling agent is free of wetting and emulsifying agents.

8. (new) The pickling agent of claim 7, comprising, in its application as bath pickle:

5.0 to 11 wt-% sulfuric acid or 8.0 to 20 wt-% phosphoric acid;

4.0 to 10 wt-% hydrogen fluoride; and

4.5 to 11 wt-% acid-soluble aromatic nitro compound.

9. (new) The pickling agent of claim 7, additionally comprising, in its application as spraying or brush pickle:

2.5 to 5.5 wt-% magnesium compound.

10. (new) The pickling agent of claim 7, comprising, in its application as spraying pickle:

9.5 to 15.5 wt-% sulfuric acid or 15.0 to 30.0 wt-% phosphoric acid;

4.0 to 11.0 wt-% hydrogen fluoride,

4.5 to 11.5 wt-% acid-soluble aromatic nitro compound; and

2.5 to 4.5 wt-% magnesium compound.

11. (new) The pickling agent of claim 7, comprising, in its application as brush pickle:

12.0 to 16.0 wt-% sulfuric acid or 18.0 to 30.0 wt-% phosphoric acid;

4.5 to 12.0 wt-% hydrogen fluoride;

2.5 to 9.5 wt-% acid-soluble aromatic nitro compound; and

3.0 to 5.5 wt-% magnesium compound.

12. (new) The pickling agent as claimed in claim 7, wherein said acid-soluble aromatic nitro compound comprises m-nitrobenzene sulfonate and/or 3-nitrophthalate.